

The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

Positions for the Human Rights Council

I. Responding to Violence and Discrimination Against the LGBTI Community

The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (U.K.) recognizes the importance of responding to violence and discrimination in the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Intersex (LGBTI) community. The United Kingdom acknowledges that the world has made progress with regards to safeguarding the LGBTI community. Over the past century we have seen a decrease in the criminalization of homosexuality, with more than 100 countries removing such outdated laws. Moreover, there has been progress in the establishment of safety shelters for LGBTI-identifying youth and in the proliferation of sensitivity and anti-discrimination training in both the public and private sector. The world has also seen significant progress in the de-stigmatization of LGBTI individuals, including the World Health Organization's redefining of "Gender Incongruence" and the removal of "Transgender" from the list of mental health diagnoses. But as a global community, the United Kingdom believes we have further to go. As Prime Minister Theresa May said, "I was struck by just how many [survey respondents] said they cannot be open about their sexual orientation...for fear of a negative reaction. No one should ever have to hide who they are or who they love." Over 70 countries still criminalize being LGBTI, and 8 countries hold identifying within the LGBTI parameters as punishable by death. Even within the U.K., recent surveys have found that 1 in 5 identifying as LGBTI report having encountered a hate crime, and nearly 80% of hate crimes targeting LGBTI individuals go unreported. We believe that the world can, and must, do better.

While there are still many advances that must be achieved to ensure equality and safety for LGBTI individuals, the global community generally, and the United Kingdom specifically, have made major strides in this area. The United Kingdom strongly supported the adoption in 2016 of the foundational A/HRC/RES/32/2. Domestically, the United Kingdom created its first-ever action plan for transgender individuals in 2011, which highlighted the importance of understanding, including, and supporting such individuals, while also working to change societal perceptions and increase acceptance. Furthermore, in July of 2018, the U.K. created a 75-point action plan, along with \$6 million in funding, vowing to end discriminatory practices such as conversion therapy. In order to further anti-discrimination efforts, the United Kingdom has outlined provisions in the Equality Act that aim to protect LGBTI rights. This act includes several components, such as education and inclusion programs, and easing requirements for gender reassignment surgery coverage. As one preventative measure to ensure the safety and wellbeing of LGBTI individuals, more specifically transgender peoples, the United Kingdom has introduced a "Toolkit" to help nurses and health professionals identify and prevent suicide amongst young transgender individuals. To further the safety of LGBTI individuals, the government created a set of guidelines for current and newly recruited police officers, teaching them how to properly respond to hate crimes targeting the LGBTI community.

The United Kingdom encourages Member States to take several steps to protect the rights of the LGBTI population. First, the U.K. recognizes that the most effective protections occur at the state level. As such, the U.K. strongly encourages Member States to adopt lasting and meaningful legal protections for LGBTI peoples, along the lines of the United Kingdom's 2010 Equality Act. Second, Member States should consider the use of smart sanctions in situations where regional or state officials violate LGBTI rights, such as the recent American sanctions of Chechen officials in response to Chechnya's consistent record of anti-LGBTI harassment. Third, the U.K. has had success domestically with training for police and other state officials on how to interact with the LGBTI community and would like to see such a program created internationally under U.N. auspices. Fourth, in recognition of the growing use of technology to facilitate communication and matchmaking in the LGBTI community, and the misuse by state officials of the same technology to find and discriminate against LGBTI individuals, the United Kingdom calls for a summit to be held in London in the fall of 2019 to bring together leading technology and dating app personnel and concerned officials to find better ways to protect users in oppressive regimes. Finally, in egregious cases of discrimination and harassment, the U.K. supports more utilization of the HRC's Complaint Procedure. Steps such as these can help end violence and discrimination against LGBTI individuals.

II. Enhancing Inclusion and Integration of Migrant Workers in Host Countries

The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland remains committed to finding ways of integrating and including migrant workers in host societies, while still respecting the sovereignty of host countries. The United Kingdom acknowledges that this has been a tricky issue for the country domestically over the past decade, and encourages Member States to find solutions that allow for both the needs of migrant workers and host societies to be met. The integration of migrants can benefit everyone in a society, which is why the United Kingdom supports inclusivity of migrants that have lawfully immigrated. The numbers involved in migrant working are staggering and speak to the importance and urgency of this issue. As of 2017, U.N. estimates place the number of migrant workers at nearly 258 million, with an additional 68.5 million individuals forcibly displaced as a result of persecution, conflict, and human rights abuses. Migrant workers travel to countries near and far, though the United Kingdom is the fifth largest host country of such labourers. Solutions to integrating migrant workers must recognize these different subpopulations and their different needs and goals.

The United Kingdom has been active both at the international and domestic levels in ensuring more effective monitoring in areas of the economy prone to labour exploitation, as well as more effective coordination between police and victim support organizations. Internationally, the United Kingdom supported the creation and adoption of the 2018 Global Compact for Safe, Orderly, and Regular Migration. This compact aims to facilitate safe migration, which is a vital aspect of ensuring migrant rights. Domestically, each of the four constituent countries of the United Kingdom has resources for migrant workers and their employers, as well as agencies created to ensure the well-being of such persons. Britain has a national regulator for workplace health and safety, known as “the Health and Safety Executive,” (HSE) which is an all-encompassing resource for everything related to migrant worker rights. The services provided by the HSE are applicable for legal and non-legal migrant workers in the United Kingdom. Moreover, Her Majesty’s Revenue and Customs offers information to migrant workers regarding taxes, national insurance, tax credits, and the National Minimum Wage. The U.K. created the Equality Advisory and Support Service for migrant workers who have faced documented cases of discrimination. The country went further in 2016 by further criminalizing the exploitation and abuse of workers, creating a new Office of Employment Rights Compliance (ODERC), reforming the tax system to protect migrant workers benefits, and creating a new employment rights procedure for easier access to justice and fair compensation when such rights are denied. Lastly, the issue of migrant worker inclusivity is of paramount focus for the United Kingdom in the midst of leaving the European Union, and the U.K. continues to work to improve living and working conditions for current migrant workers, even while reserving the right to control immigration flows in the future.

The United Kingdom acknowledges that coming to a broad international agreement on issues around migrant workers will be challenging in the current political atmosphere, particularly when sovereignty concerns must be addressed. The U.K. would encourage Member States to find the common grounds that can be broadly agreed to: while each individual Member State might have their own policies regarding immigration and border security, once migrant workers have legally entered a society, it benefits everyone - worker and native alike - to ensure that those workers are integrated properly. The United Kingdom believes there are several areas of focus for Member State actions. First, education and language are vital both for migrant workers and their families. Member States should work with interested nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) to set up more training opportunities for migrant workers, especially in areas of labor law and local language training. Member State funding for such NGO’s would be welcome. Workers who know more about their rights, and who feel they have an evolving state-sponsored network to tap into, are less likely to fall victim to human rights violations. Language education for migrant workers and their families is also crucial to ensuring that migrants can integrate smoothly into host societies. Finally, attention must be paid to the health and well-being of migrant workers. The HSE system has worked well for the U.K. and could be used as a model for other Member States. Individual Member States reserve the right to set their own legal immigration policies, but all Member States have an ethical responsibility to make sure that those migrant workers who arrive in their country receive fair treatment and an opportunity to integrate with their new society. As the International Organization for Migration’s European Regional Director Eugenio Ambrosi said, “Better [integration]...make them a better part of our society and therefore strengthen our own social system.”